

By Søren Søndergaard, MP, Denmark

Dear fellow parliamentarians.

Because that's what we are: parliamentarians! We are not here as representatives of our government. That's also why we have disagreements even within our own delegations. Hopefully, I would say. That's democracy.

In any case I do not speak on behalf of the Danish government. But I believe that the vast majority of the Danish population – and most others too – feel disgusted by the wars and man-made disasters that are taking place around the world, whether it is the famine in Sudan, the suffering civilian population in the bombed out Gaza or the population of Ukraine, who are daily exposed to deadly attacks with missiles and drones.

What can we do? How can we work towards a more peaceful world, where it is not the right of the strongest that dominate, but where disagreements are resolved on the basis of internationally recognized rules and conventions. Where the rule of law does not only apply inside individual countries, but on a global level. No country can function if individuals take the law into their own hands at will. How can it be different when we talk about relations between countries? For example, how else can we stop the man-made climate change that threatens our planet and that is already costing lives, causing famine and massive destruction today – not least in the global South.

The fight for an international legal order is not new. It was the background for the establishment of the UN on 24 October 1945 – 80 years ago on Friday. It was the basis for the UN's adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights followed by many other international conventions and agreements. And that was the background for the establishment of The International Court of Justice, ICJ, and more recently The International Criminal Court, ICC, which can prosecute individuals – including state leaders – suspected of having committed war crimes.

This system is certainly not perfect. But what is the alternative? Even more endless conflicts, where no one can be held accountable regardless of the crimes they commit? Our task is not to weaken or abolish this system, but to reform and strengthen it.

Especially in a situation where the international legal order is under pressure. One issue is that a few major powers are staying outside the ICC. Another issue is that some of them have launched a direct attack on the court. For example, the United States has unilaterally blocked the court's access to its email account and frozen bank deposits. At the same time, they are threatening the court's chief prosecutor and other senior staffers with arrest if they set foot in the United States. Simply because they disagree with the ICC's decision. Honestly: That behavior is not worthy of a state governed by the rule of law.

Unfortunately, this is not the only example where the current leadership in the United States shows its lack of respect for the international legal order. We as Danes have experienced it ourselves in relation to Greenland. US President Trump has openly and directly threatened to take control of Greenland not excluding use of military force.

Today, Greenland is an autonomous territory of Denmark. But we respect the wish of the Greenlandic people for more independence. And if the Greenlandic people decide to secede from Denmark and become an independent state, we of course will accept it. It's called the peoples right to self-determination. But being occupied by the United States against one's will is not independence. It is a fundamental breach of international law. Something we unfortunately also see elsewhere in the world, for example with the Russian occupation of parts of Ukraine and with the continued and expanded illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Therefore, fellow parliamentarians: Let's stand together for international law and the international legal order. And let us do it now. Tomorrow may be too late.